

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

July 9, 2007

[Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#) | [Classified](#) | [Yellow pages](#) | [Log In](#) | [Register](#)

User Name / E-mail:

Password:

[Forgot password?](#)

■ VALLEY & STATE online print edition



Environmental groups oppose routing freeway through park

Kerry Fehr-Snyder

The Arizona Republic

Jul. 5, 2007 12:00 AM

The head of a prominent environmental group is calling a plan that would blast parts of South Mountain Park for a proposed freeway "outrageous and irresponsible."

Sandy Bahr, conservation outreach director for the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon chapter, said the group is disappointed that the proposed route for the 22-mile South Mountain Freeway would mean cutting a chunk out of three ridge lines in the 16,000-acre park.

"From the Sierra Club's perspective, we're opposed to cutting through the preserve," she said at a recent monthly meeting. "It's really outrageous and irresponsible."

The park is a wildlife corridor with desert animals including bobcats, javelinas, tortoises, foxes, reptiles and squirrels. But none is protected under the Endangered Species Act, Bahr said.

Doug Nintzel, spokesman for the Arizona Department of Transportation, said the cuts make up a relatively small proportion of the park - 32 of 16,000 acres - and have long been anticipated in the design for the proposed freeway.

"The cuts through the ridges would be designed to minimize the impact, and that's required as part of any project like this," he said.

But Michael Goodman, a member of the Phoenix Mountains Preserve Council, said Phoenix should be preserving the park and fighting the state's powers of eminent domain to bulldoze it for the freeway.

The preserve runs south of Baseline Road starting at about 27th Avenue on the west and swinging eastward to 48th Street.

ADOT has said the most likely design would mean the removal of three ridge lines on the mountain. Construction crews would make cuts up to 20 stories deep and more than two football fields wide to make way for the 10-lane freeway.

Goodman, who also serves on the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team, said he is frustrated by the lack of information about freeway noise, the fate of animals, the visual impact and other environmental aspects to cutting through the mountain.

That information is expected to be included in a mandated environmental impact statement being prepared by ADOT.

The state transportation agency is considering two alternatives to cutting away parts of mountain ridges. One is tunneling through the mountain; the other is building a bridge over it.

None of the options is acceptable to Goodman, Bahr or Laurel Arndt, a member of the advisory team and the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee.

"A lot of people say that it (the freeway) has been on the books for 20 years, so 'Suck it up, Ahwatukee, suck it up, Laveen,' " Arndt said. "But nobody lives by a 20-year-old plan. "

She said the proposed freeway is trying to solve three problems: Broadway Curve congestion along Interstate 10, limited transportation access for Laveen residents and the need for a truck bypass around I-10.

The only route to avoid cutting into the South Mountain Park is building the freeway on land owned by the Gila River Indian Community or individual landowners.

Recently, the tribal council created a transportation committee to discuss widening I-10 and Loop 202 with state leaders, but it remains unclear whether that includes building the freeway on the reservation.

What do you think?

Registered users can post comments on this article

azcentral.com login required

- [sign in to post a comment](#) »
- [click here to register for a free account](#) »

- jamm0r1
- Posted: Jul 5, 2007 at 2:19 AM
- [Report a violation](#)

And will probably be on the books 20 more years

- [ManOfScience | Profile](#)
- Posted: Jul 5, 2007 at 11:40 AM
- [Report a violation](#)



This is one of the dumbest and most expensive ideas ever. Let's see, the "Preserve" has already been established as a

place for wildlife which has nowhere to go in an urban area. Now, ADOT wants to BLAST AWAY 3 MOUNTAIN RIDGES? UP TO 20 STORIES DEEP? How does this remotely sound like a good idea? How can these people sleep at night? We're losing the grand Sonoran Desert one parcel at a time, people--it isn't a ubiquitous ecosystem and despite being a "desert" it is quite fragile and sensitive.

- [CorrectOpinion](#)
- Posted: Jul 5, 2007 at 3:23 PM
- [Report a violation](#)

I am looking forward to the South Mountain Freeway being built. I am not concerned if a couple ridges are cut away that no one uses but some bunnies and a few hikers. Or concerned that some people in 'Tukee bought houses next to an area that had a freeway proposed for the last 25 years. Instead of complaining about how the mountain will be cut through, why aren't these complainers trying to get the alternative route through the reservation. The freeway is needed, anyone who has driven through Phoenix during the day knows that traffic is a huge problem. And if there is an accident in the tunnel...forget it. The reservation should be happy about the freeway, it would make it faster for West Phoenix to get to their casinos. 'Tukee residents, next time don't buy a house next to a freeway corridor, the realtor lied.

Your Comment:

You must be logged in to post comments.

[Log In](#) | [Register](#)